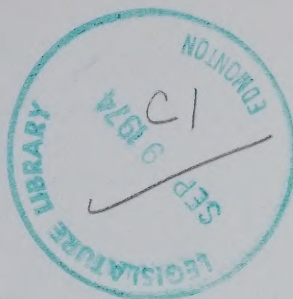
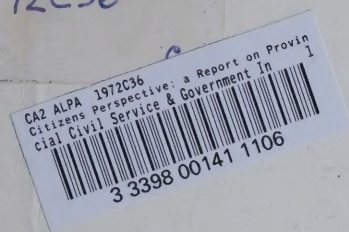
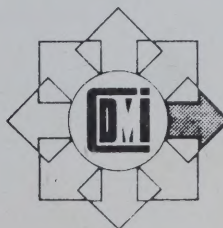
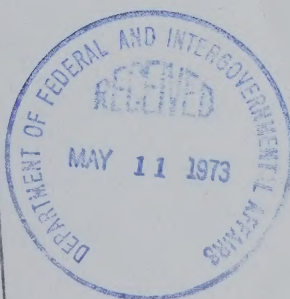
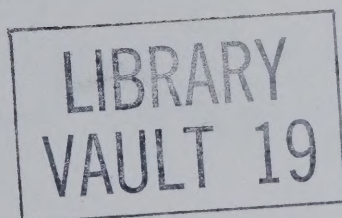


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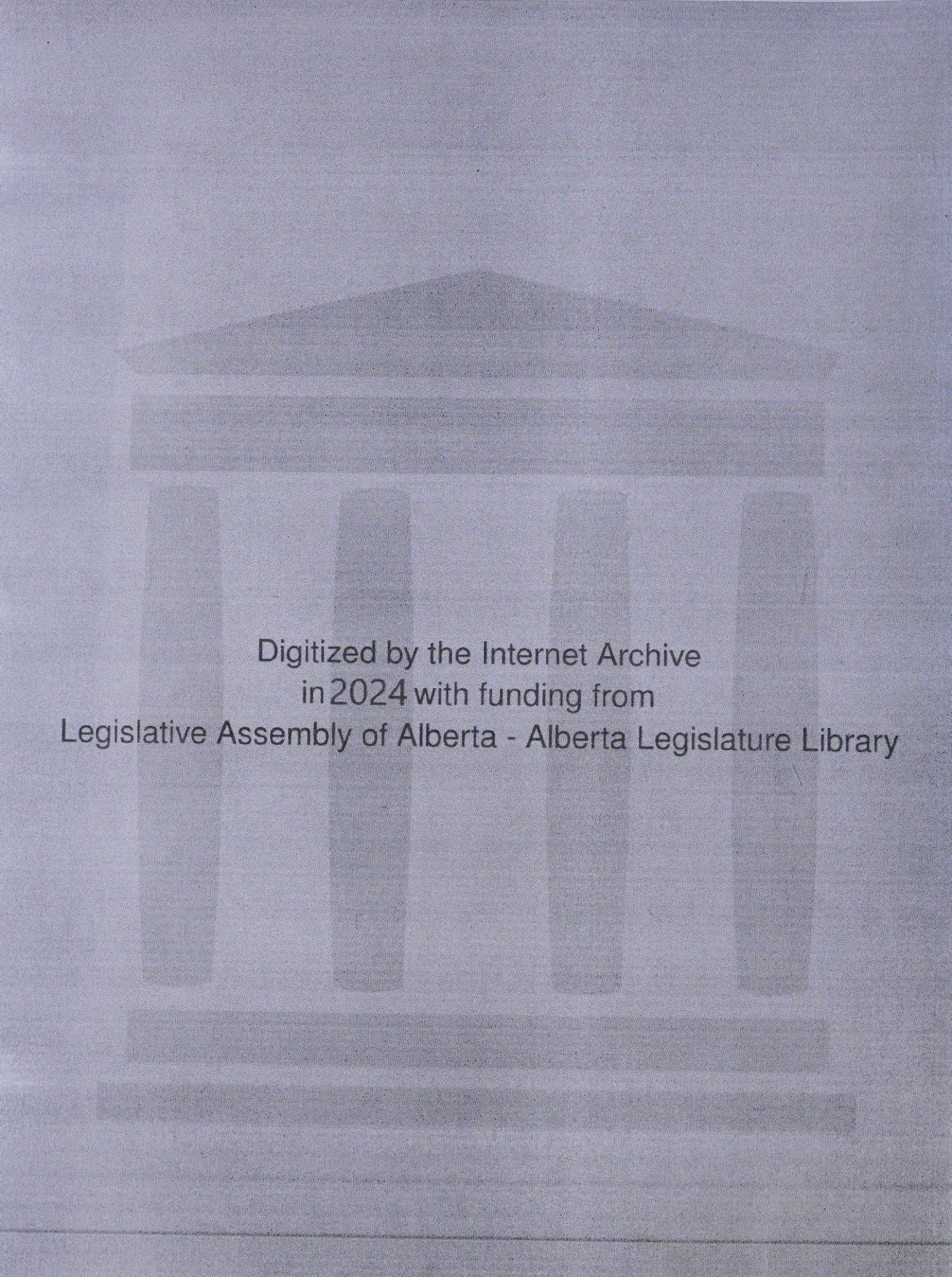


The citizen perspective:  
a report on provincial civil service  
and government information services



DECISION  
MAKING  
INFORMATION  
CANADA  
LIMITED





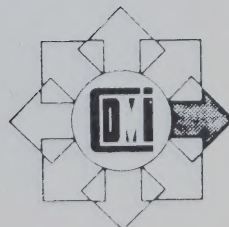
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### THE CITIZENS PERSPECTIVE:

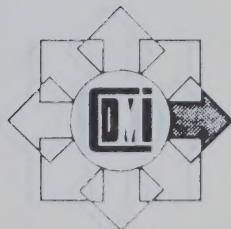
I	Objectives	8
II	Methods	12
III	A REPORT ON PROVINCIAL CIVIL SERVICE & GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES	12
IV	What Are the Problems in Dealing With Governmental Information?	12
V	What Information Do People Want?	12
VI	How Do People Presently Obtain Information?	12
VII	Summary	22
	Appendix - About the Research Company	26





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I Objectives	3
II Methods	4
III Government Employees: How Do They Look?	6
IV What Are the Problems in Dealing with Government Employees?	11
V What Information Do People Want?	15
VI How Do People Presently Obtain Information?	16
VII Summary	21
Appendix - About the Research Company	26

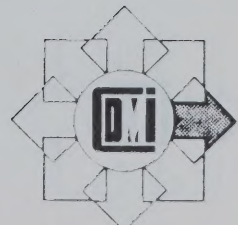




## I OBJECTIVES

This report is designed to provide decision making information concerning several basic questions:

- (1) How are the provincial government employees perceived by Alberta citizens?
- (2) What information about government do people want?
- (3) Where do people get their information about government?
- (4) How could the government better communicate with the public as a whole?







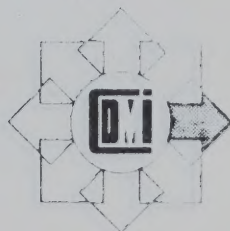
## II METHODS

In order to obtain the objectives outlined, a public opinion survey was undertaken during the summer of 1972.<sup>1</sup> A total of 606 Alberta residents 18 years of age or older were interviewed. Care was taken to ensure that people from all regions within the province were given the opportunity to participate.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This document is a summary analysis of a report presented to the Bureau of Public Affairs. The completed report is available through the office of Mr. David Wood, Managing Director, Bureau of Public Affairs. The final report explains in detail the methods used and has a comprehensive analysis accompanied by aggregate tables, cross-tabulations and pertinent statistical information.

<sup>2</sup>The respondents were chosen by utilizing a random probability sample which included over 85% of the provinces population. Only those individuals residing in very remote areas of the province were not included in the sampling frame.



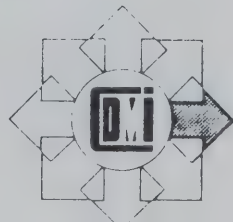


## SAMPLE SELECTION

The sampling technique, which approximates a proportional random probability sample, was used for two major reasons:

- (1) Samples of this type generally produce results which approximate those that would have been obtained if every person in the survey area had been interviewed.
- (2) Although no sample produces perfectly projectable results, the extent to which this type of sample is subject to error can be mathematically determined.

In this particular sample, the mathematics indicate that in 95 out of 100 cases, the reported percentages will not differ from the true population values by more than  $\pm 4$  percentage points.





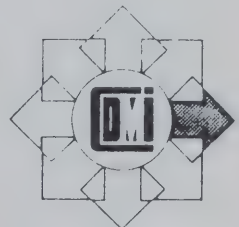


### III     GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES: HOW DO THEY LOOK?

Many Albertans (28%) have a very positive impression of government employees. As one city housewife exclaimed, *"I think they are a pretty competent bunch."* A retired Edmonton man was even more impressed, *"I think they are the best I've seen. They give you all the information you want - I've always been satisfied."*

Twenty nine percent perceived government employees to be 'average' or 'about the same as anyone else'.

Those who are not impressed with government employees (24%) are also very adamant. The negative impressions held by most Albertans is that government employees have little or no ambition and as a result are inefficient and lack initiative. As one farmer's wife put it, *"I don't think they do too much. Whenever anyone wants anything done, it takes too long to get*







through to them.". A city machine operator was even more explicit in stating, "They tend to pass the buck - no response [to inquiries] at any level - they just pass it on to the next department.".

Table 1.

IMPRESSIONS OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

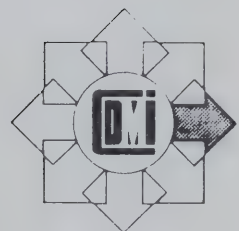
Positive Impressions	28%
Neither Negative or Positive	29%
Negative Impressions	24%
Don't Know	19%





People who are constantly in touch with government employees are more critical. Nearly one of every three of these individuals have a negative impression of provincial government employees.

The segment of the population most critical of Alberta civil servants are those with a post-secondary education. Thirty-six percent of this group have a negative impression.







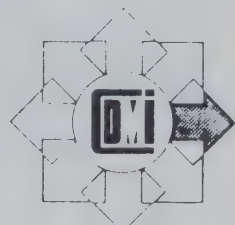
"ALBERTA CIVIL SERVANTS ARE NICE PEOPLE  
TAKING IT EASY ON THE JOB"

Few respondents perceived the government employees as being discourteous (11%), or lacking in intellectual ability (11%). Nor did many respondents see them as being unfair or incompetent (9% and 14% respectively).

Perceptions of job effectiveness is much less positive however. Forty three percent of the population perceived government employees to be slow. One in four Albertans feel that they are lazy rather than hard-working, unconcerned rather than concerned, and inactive rather than active.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Younger citizens were somewhat more critical. In the 18 - 24 year group nearly thirty percent perceived government employees to be inactive. Fifty seven percent of this group also perceived government employees to be slow.





The general conclusions to be drawn from this data are as follows:

- (1) Government employees are perceived as being intelligent, courteous, fair and competent by most Albertans.
- (2) A large segment of the population feel that government employees are slow, lazy, unconcerned and inactive. This would suggest a "security syndrome" and lack of motivation.
- (3) Those individuals that have had occasion to come in contact with government employees or are more aware of the services they render, tend to be more critical of them.







#### IV      WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS IN DEALING          WITH GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES?

The data suggests that one out of every ten Albertans have had a negative experience in dealing with government employees. When translated in actual numbers, this finding suggests that slightly over 100,000 people have had trouble dealing with the provincial civil service. While undoubtedly a portion of those complaints are due to people making requests of government employees that are impossible to fulfill due to regulations or laws, there is nonetheless a feeling on the part of these citizens that they have been treated in an inappropriate manner.

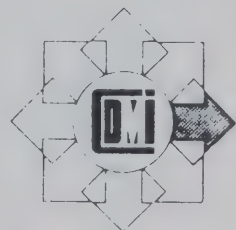
Three percent of the total sample gave examples of arrogant, uncooperative, or dishonest provincial employees. As one farmer put it, *"I got chewed out by the fellow when I phoned for information."* The vice





president of a coal company ran into a slightly different problem, "There was a certain degree of arrogance exhibited when I contacted one department until they [government employees] found I was prepared to go further; then they became more cooperative."

Another three percent gave examples of inefficient employees, or cited instances where provincial employees were considered to have given them the 'runabout'. The following is a classical example of the problems that one new Alberta citizen had in obtaining government information. "A year ago last January - for the Alberta Health plan and Blue Cross cause I pay for myself - I go to provincial office and he no got - he send me to Treasury Branch and he no got - he tell me to go to provincial office - then that man tell me to go to Post Office - Post Office man he nice - he tell me he no got just now - he tell me go to provincial office and tell them he no got papers - he write for some and send it to me - anyway I go to my doctor and he write for me - new man that time - he young man - old man he send me to young man."

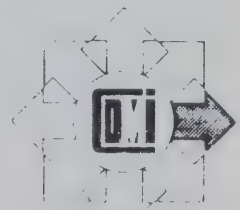




### WHERE ARE THE PROBLEM AREAS?

The government services about which citizens complained are as follows:

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| (1) | Health and Welfare Services   | 20% |
|     | - welfare officers, social workers, Alberta Health Care   |     |
| (2) | Employees and Officials   | 20% |
|     | - specific department or services not named   |     |
| (3) | Highways Department   | 14% |
|     | - license procedures, Motor Vehicles Branch   |     |
| (4) | Lands and Forests   | 8%  |
| (5) | A.G.T.  | 6%  |
|     | - office personnel  |     |
| (6) | Miscellaneous Departments   | 20% |
|     | - Alberta Treasury Branches, complaints about taxation, Alberta Liquor Control Board, University Registrar's Office, planning commissions, etc. |     |
| (7) | Federal Government Matters  | 8%  |
|     | - This group of respondents held the provincial government responsible for the mistreatment they received by federal government employees       |     |
| (8) | Don't Know/No Opinion   | 4%  |







Given the broad spectrum of complaints, it is important to note that the provincial government is held responsible by some citizens for the actions of independent boards and organizations.





## V WHAT INFORMATION DO PEOPLE WANT?

Nearly one of every three Albertans feel that they could be better informed about what is going on in their provincial government. In particular, these people would like to know more about many different aspects of government. While there were many diverse requests for information concerning particular programs, such as job training programs, health and welfare services, etc., of particular interest to many Albertans is the state of the Alberta economy. As one Calgary housewife suggested, "*I would like to know exactly how much we are in the red. I thought we were pretty well established due to the sale of oil but now it seems we are quite a bit in debt.*". Another respondent suggested that he would like to know "*...how much is spent on each program.*". Responses such as this indicate that people are not aware of where they might obtain this information or, are not willing to spend the necessary time to better inform themselves. (The latter may very well be a function of the manner in which this kind of information is made available to the public.)







## VI HOW DO PEOPLE PRESENTLY OBTAIN INFORMATION?

Most urban respondents indicated they rely on direct contact with the various branches of government for information about government programs. Rural respondents on the other hand are more apt to contact their M.L.A. for information. Some people use rather unique approaches such as contacting the news media. Several people thought the best way to get information would be to contact the local radio station or newspaper. Other people felt that personal contact with a friend who works for the government would be the most fruitful approach. There is in short, no one single approach that is used by a majority of people as being the best approach to government.

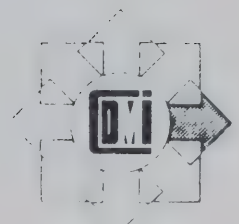
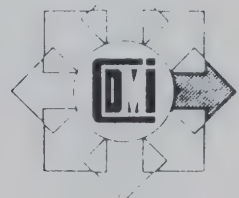




Table 2.

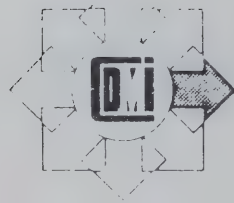
<u>METHOD OF OBTAINING INFORMATION</u>	
Contact Department Involved	28%
Contact Local M.L.A.	23%
Phone or Write Government	16%
Visit Local Government Office	4%
Contact News Media	2%
Ask Friend or Associate	3%
Contact District Agriculturist	2%
Through Local M.P. (meant M.L.A.)	4%
Through City Hall	3%
Miscellaneous (Chamber of Commerce, Universities, Social workers, yellow pages)	6%
Don't Know How to Obtain Information	10%

Perhaps the most significant finding is that a full ten percent of the public do not have any idea as to how they should go about getting information. As might have been expected, a preponderance of those that don't know where to go for information are the poorly educated, and are laborers or unemployed. Another group uncertain





as to how to approach government are the aged. Twenty one percent of those over 65 years had no idea where to go for information about government programs.





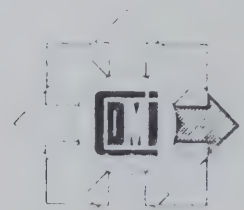


What about those who seek information from the government, how successful are they?

Obviously, the three most common ways of contacting the government for the purpose of obtaining information are through the medium of the telephone, writing, and a personal visit to government offices.

Nearly seventy five percent of the sample did not feel that they had had direct contact with the provincial government. This finding suggests two things: (1) many Albertans fail to come in contact with the provincial government in any direct way; (2) some Albertans do not associate contact with government employees as being closely connected to the 'provincial government'.

For the twenty five percent that did remember having contacted the government, regardless of the medium used in contacting government, nearly nine of every ten respondents found the information they were seeking.





Those that failed listed several complaints. First, those using the telephone were more apt to get 'the runabout' than was the case with those writing or visiting government offices. Second, although there was less criticism of the government by those who actually visited the offices, some felt that they were ignored or meant to feel as though they were intruding. Of the respondents who indicated they wrote the government for information, nearly seventy two percent received the information requested without any difficulty, although in many cases, the respondent complained about receiving pre-printed form letters.





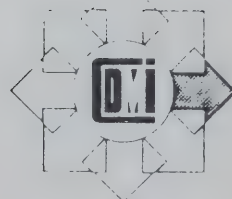
## VII WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO GET INFORMATION?

In an effort to discover the most desirable way to communicate with Albertans, each respondent was asked to indicate which of several different information sources would be most preferable to them.

Table 3.

### PREFERRED COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

<i>Receiving Information from M.L.A.</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>Through a Local Information Officer</i>	<i>9%</i>
<i>Through a Central Toll Free Information Centre in Edmonton</i>	<i>16%</i>
<i>By Contacting a Particular Department</i>	<i>9%</i>
<i>Through Regular Radio &amp; T.V. Shows</i>	<i>18%</i>
<i>Through Newspaper Advertisements</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>Through Regular Mailed Government Publications</i>	<i>29%</i>





Mailed publications to the respondent's home was preferred by nearly one of every three respondents. This method of informing the populace was preferred by nearly two to one over television and radio, a central toll-free information centre in Edmonton, or the local member of the legislative assembly.

The source of information rated as the least effective was, as might be expected, the newspaper advertisements as but five percent ranked this source first. There was very little difference between the other six common techniques examined.







## VIII SUMMARY

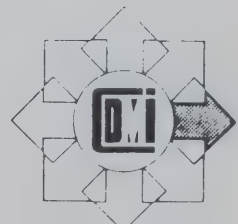
This study comes to the following basic conclusions:

- (1) Government employees are perceived as being intelligent, courteous, fair and competent by most Albertans.
- (2) A large segment of the population feel that government employees are slow, lazy, unconcerned, and inactive. This would suggest a "security syndrome" and lack of motivation.
- (3) Those individuals that have had occasion to come in contact with government employees or are more aware of the services they render, tend to be more critical of them.



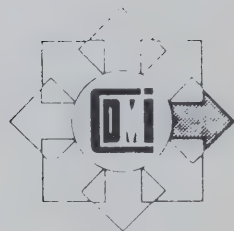


- (4) When government employees are contacted people feel they are treated in an arrogant or uncooperative manner.
- (5) Albertans want to know more about what is going on in government - particularly regarding budgetary matters.
- (6) Ten percent of the citizens do not know how to go about contacting government.
- (7) Many Albertans have never perceived having had contacted the provincial government.
- (8) Nearly one-third of those seeking information from government do not feel they are getting adequate information.
- (9) Mailing information to the respondent personally is preferred by more respondents than any other method of communication.





## APPENDIX



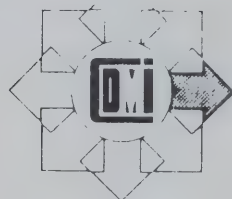


## DECISION MAKING INFORMATION CANADA LTD.

Decision Making Information Canada is a Canadian owned and controlled research organization. The firm was established in January 1971. However, the genesis of the company stems from 1966, when the management nucleus initiated its research activities.

DMIC is a fully integrated research firm, able to handle all phases of survey research from beginning to end. The company does not rely on other firms nor consultants for services such as sampling, field supervision, coding, data processing, or statistical analysis. The ability of DMIC to provide its clients with this wide range of services permits the company to operate efficiently and ensures that the client's report will be held in the strictest confidence.

In terms of survey research, the executive nucleus of DMIC and their associates have analyzed, conducted, and







directed over four hundred (400) projects in every region of the United States and Western Canada. In other areas, DMIC's management nucleus has collected general economic and demographic profile data for every county in the United States and every census division in the Prairie provinces.

In sum, DMIC is well-equipped in both experience and present organizational status to handle large-scale studies. Whether the project is local, regional or national in scope, the same level of precision and quality controls are available regardless of the universe defined. The experience of DMIC's personnel in model building, index construction, and scaling permits us to meet the requirement of developing meaningful measures of effectiveness and impact without heavy recourse to outside consultants.





#### DAVID K. ELTON

David Elton has conducted and coordinated commercial and institutional research studies throughout the Western United States and Canada, during the past six years. He has also participated in several academic research projects while studying at the University of Alberta. Professor Elton presently teaches Canadian Government and Political Behavior at The University of Lethbridge.

As a DMIC consultant, David Elton supervised the selection of the sample, the designing of the interview schedule, and the interpretation of the data.

#### E. WINSTON ELTON

Winston Elton was Project Director for the Alberta Government Information Study. He has had experience with DMIC in survey research methods and procedures, personnel management and project coordination. He has a Bachelors degree from Brigham Young University and is presently involved in graduate study and research in quantitative methods and market research.





## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Each interview schedule has a cover page indicating the sampling procedure to the interviewer and the introduction to the respondent.

1. How long have you lived in Alberta?
  - 1 ( ) Less than 2 years
  - 2 ( ) 2 - 5 years
  - 3 ( ) Over 5 years
  
2. How long have you lived at this address?
  - 1 ( ) Less than 1 year
  - 2 ( ) 1 - 3 years
  - 3 ( ) Over 3 years
  
3. What is the highest grade of formal education you have completed?
  - 1 ( ) Grade 9 or less
  - 2 ( ) Some high school/high school grad
  - 3 ( ) Technical school/some university/R.N.
  - 4 ( ) University grad
  
4. What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. What is your religion?
  - 1 ( ) Catholic
  - 2 ( ) Greek Orthodox
  - 3 ( ) Protestant/Anglican/United Church
  - 4 ( ) Sectarian
  - 5 ( ) Other - specify \_\_\_\_\_



6. Could you look at this card HAND RESPONDENT CARD and tell me by number which age group you fall into? Just give me the number. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Would you look at this card HAND RESPONDENT CARD and pick the number which you think best describes the level of income for yourself and your family for one year? Which number is that? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What ethnic group or cultural group do you or did your ancestors (on the male side) belong to on coming to Canada?

1 ( ) English, Irish, Scottish

2 ( ) French

3 ( ) German

4 ( ) Italian

5 ( ) Polish

6 ( ) Netherlands

7 ( ) Scandinavian

8 ( ) Ukrainian

9 ( ) Other - specify \_\_\_\_\_

9. What organizations do you belong to? (e.g. unions, clubs, associations, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Would you permit us to interview you at a later date?

1 ( ) Yes

2 ( ) No





NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEWERS: PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

11. What is the respondent's sex?

1 ( ) Male

2 ( ) Female

12. CANCELLED QUESTION

13. Respondent's general interest in public affairs seems:

1 ( ) Very high

2 ( ) Fairly high

3 ( ) Average

4 ( ) Fairly low

5 ( ) Very low

14. Where does respondent live?

1 ( ) City

2 ( ) Town

3 ( ) Farm

15. This interview was taken on \_\_\_\_\_ (day of week)  
the \_\_\_\_\_ (date) of \_\_\_\_\_ (month).

16. FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

17. FOR OFFICE USE ONLY



18. What do you think is the most important problem facing the Province of Alberta today?

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19. Compared to the average person, to what degree do you feel you come in contact with the provincial government and its employees? Would you say you come in contact with the provincial civil servants

READ ALTERNATES

- 1 ( ) More than the average person
- 2 ( ) Same as the average person
- 3 ( ) Less than the average person
- 4 ( ) Not at all

20. Supposing you wanted information about a particular government program, how would you get this information?

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---

21. Have you ever sought information from the provincial government over the telephone?

- 1 ( ) Yes
- 2 ( ) No
- 3 ( ) Can't remember



IF 'YES' IN QUESTION 21 - ASK QUESTIONS 22 & 23:

22. How were you treated?

---

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23. Did you receive the information you were seeking?

READ ALTERNATES

- 1 ( ) Without any trouble
- 2 ( ) With some difficulty
- 3 ( ) With a great deal of difficulty
- 4 ( ) Didn't receive the information

24. Have you ever written to a provincial government office to ask for information?

- 1 ( ) Yes
- 2 ( ) No
- 3 ( ) Can't remember

IF 'YES' IN QUESTION 24 - ASK QUESTIONS 25 & 26:

25. How were you treated?

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---

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26. Did you receive the information you were seeking?

READ ALTERNATES

- 1 ( ) Without any trouble
- 2 ( ) With some difficulty
- 3 ( ) With a great deal of difficulty
- 4 ( ) Didn't receive the information.

27. Have you ever gone to a provincial government office to ask for information?

- 1 ( ) Yes
- 2 ( ) No
- 3 ( ) Can't remember

IF 'YES' IN QUESTION 27 - ASK QUESTIONS 28 & 29:

28. How were you treated?

---

---

---

29. Did you receive the information you were seeking?

READ ALTERNATES

- 1 ( ) Without any trouble
- 2 ( ) With some difficulty
- 3 ( ) With a great deal of difficulty
- 4 ( ) Didn't receive the information





30. In your dealings with the provincial government have you ever had trouble with government employees you have come in contact with?

- 1 ( ) Yes
- 2 ( ) No
- 3 ( ) Can't remember

IF 'YES' IN QUESTION 30 - ASK QUESTIONS 31, 32 & 33:

31. What kind of trouble did you have?

---

---

---

32. How were you treated?

---

---

---

33. By whom?

---

---

---



34. Generally speaking, what is your impression of government employees?

---

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35. Do you feel that the provincial government keeps us well enough informed about its programs and policies?

- 1 ( ) Yes  
2 ( ) No  
3 ( ) Don't know

IF 'NO' IN QUESTION 35 - ASK:

36. What further information would you like?

---

---

---

Here are a number of traditional and proposed ways of receiving information from the provincial government. Some of these ways are currently in effect, others are just proposed. Would you please order these programs from 1 to 7, with 1 being the program you think would be best, and 7 being the one you like least.



- 37 ( ) Receiving information through your local M.L.A.
- 38 ( ) Through a local information officer of the provincial government in your community
- 39 ( ) Through a central information centre in Edmonton with toll-free telephone lines
- 40 ( ) By contacting a particular department
- 41 ( ) Through a regular radio and T.V. show
- 42 ( ) Through newspaper advertisements
- 43 ( ) Through a regular government publication mailed to your home.

44. In your particular work situation, do you feel there are certain facts and information that the provincial government should make available to you but does not?

- 1 ( ) Yes
- 2 ( ) No
- 3 ( ) Don't know

IF 'YES' IN QUESTION 44 - ASK QUESTIONS 45 & 46:

45. What information and facts should be made available?

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46. How could they make it more available?

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47. Do you feel that the public news services, such as T.V., radio, or newspapers give unbiased and accurate information regarding provincial government activities?

- 1 ( ) Yes
- 2 ( ) No
- 3 ( ) Don't know

48. Are the administrators of the provincial government biased towards any particular group or region within the province?

- 1 ( ) Yes
- 2 ( ) No
- 3 ( ) Don't know

IF 'YES' IN QUESTION 48 - ASK:

49. Who are they biased towards?

---

---

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Here is a type of word game that helps us to better understand your feelings about provincial government employees. Please read the following word pairs and indicate where you would place the average provincial civil servant. A rating of 5 would be the average employee of any firm. A rating of 9 would be excellent. A rating of 1 would be poor.

How would you rate the provincial government civil servants with regards to the first word pair?

- |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |
|----|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| 50 | Discourteous  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Courteous    |
|    |               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9          |
|    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |
| 51 | Unfair        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Fair         |
|    |               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9          |
|    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |
| 52 | Slow          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Fast         |
|    |               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9          |
|    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |
| 53 | Unintelligent |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Intelligent  |
|    |               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9          |
|    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |
| 54 | Lazy          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Hard working |
|    |               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9          |
|    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |
| 55 | Incompetent   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Competent    |
|    |               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9          |
|    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |
| 56 | Unconcerned   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Concerned    |
|    |               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9          |
|    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |
| 57 | Passive       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Active       |
|    |               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9          |



58. The provincial government should:

READ ALTERNATES

- 1 ( ) Spend more money in order to better inform  
us of its programs
- 2 ( ) Spend less money
- 3 ( ) Spend the same amount of money on different  
programs
- 4 ( ) Don't know

INTERVIEWERS; PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION

59. Area interview was taken:

- 1 ( ) Urban
- 2 ( ) Small city
- 3 ( ) Rural - south
- 4 ( ) Rural - north





